

Plasma Universe 2008

**99.999%
of the
visible
Universe**

www.plasma-universe.com

Image: Nebula M1-67 around Star Wr124.

http://hubblesite.org/gallery/album/star_collection/pr1998038a/

Credit: Yves Grosdidier (University of Montreal and Observatoire de Strasbourg), Anthony Moffat (Universit  de Montreal), Gilles Joncas (Universit  Laval), Agnes Acker (Observatoire de Strasbourg), and NASA



COVER

Plasma Universe 2008

99.999% of the Universe



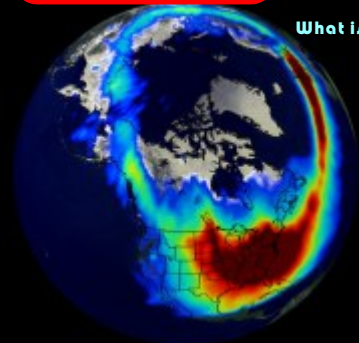
JANUARY

99.999% Plasma



FEBRUARY

What is Plasma?



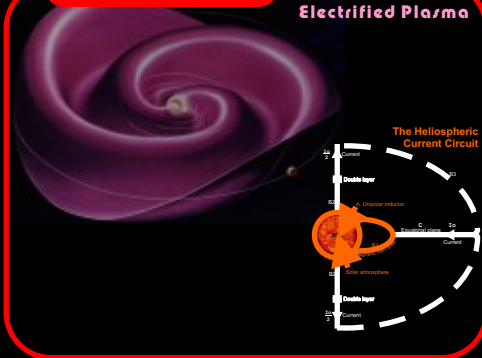
MARCH

Why is Plasma so?



APRIL

Electrified Plasma



MAY

Pinched Plasma filaments



JUNE

Plasma focus?



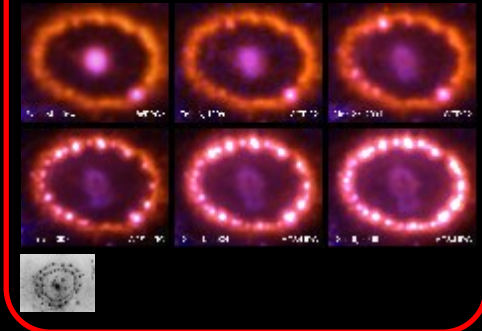
JULY

Plasma galaxy



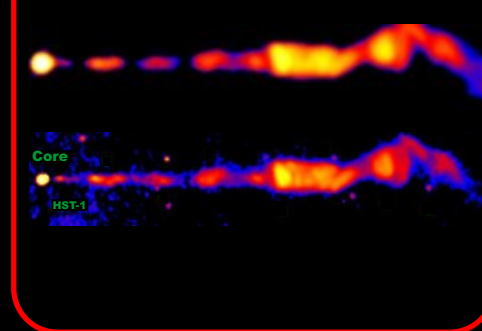
AUGUST

Plasma beams



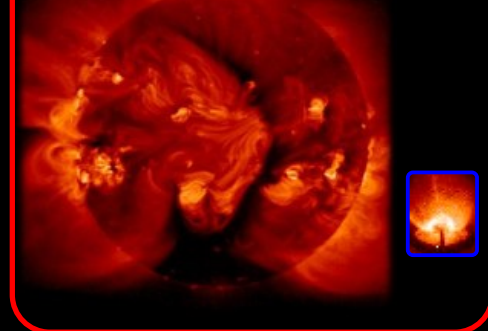
SEPTEMBER

Plasma jets



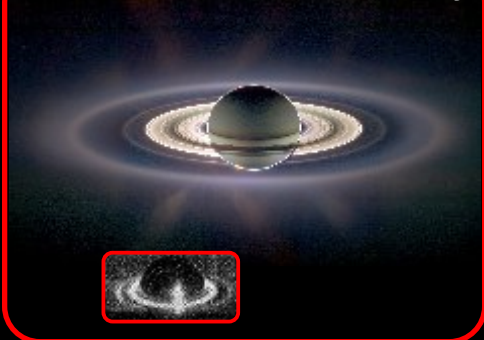
OCTOBER

Plasma sun



NOVEMBER

Plasma rings



DECEMBER

Plasma generator



Plasma Universe pioneers

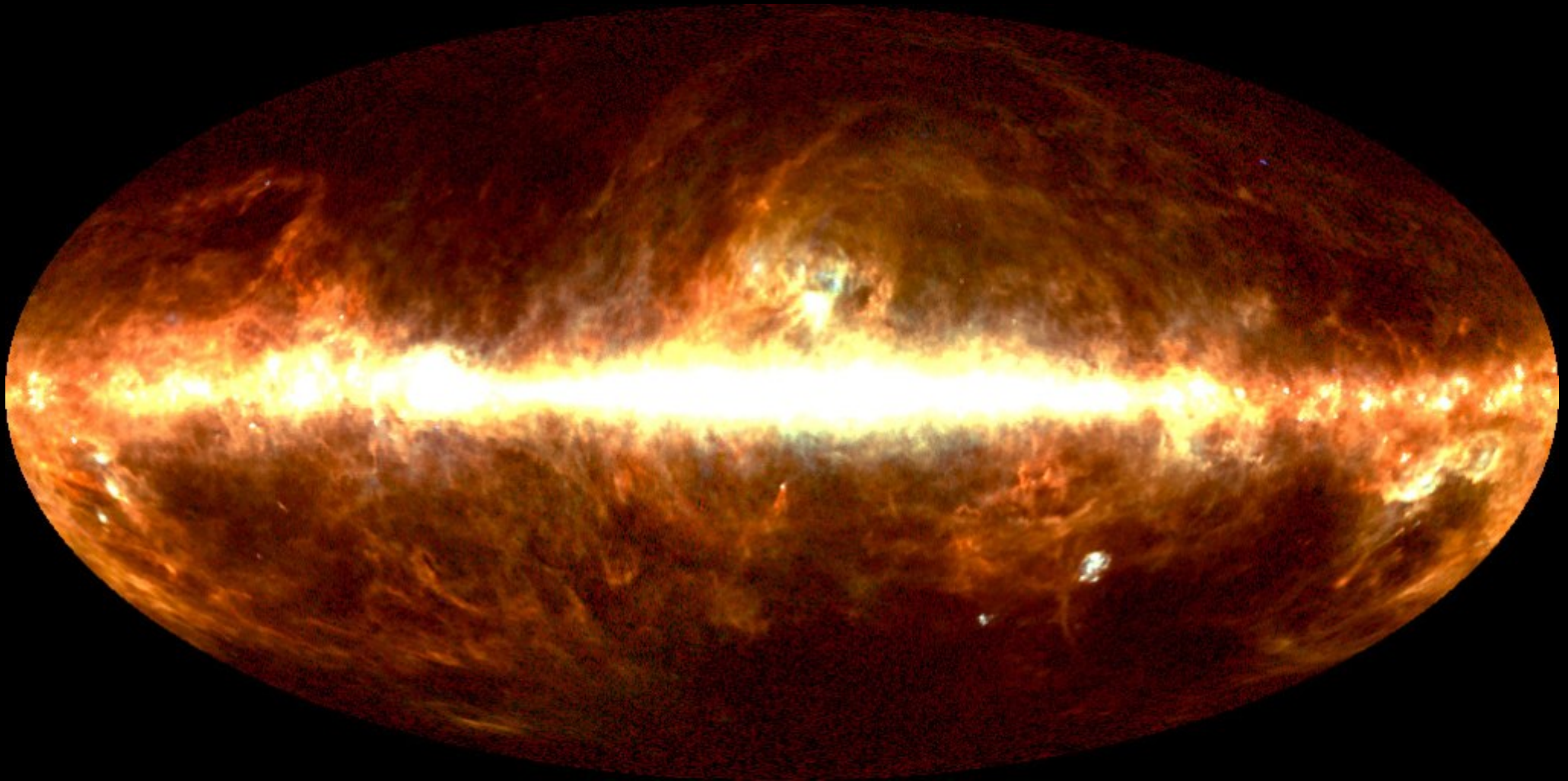


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December 2007

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 1867: Kristian Birkeland, pioneer born	15	16
17	18 1856: Sir J J Thomson, pioneer born	19	20	21 Winter Solstice	22	23
24	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27	28	29	30
31 New Year's Eve						

99.999% Plasma



The visible Universe is 99.999% plasma

Our Sun is very hot and hence nearly entirely **plasma**,...as are all the stars.

The Sun's hot solar wind filling the interplanetary medium (the space between the planets), is a **plasma**.

The interstellar medium (the space between the stars), and the intergalactic medium (space between galaxies), are nearly all **plasma**.

The Earth's ionosphere, where we see

the aurora, is a **plasma**. Dust or gas inside a plasma, behaves as a **plasma**.

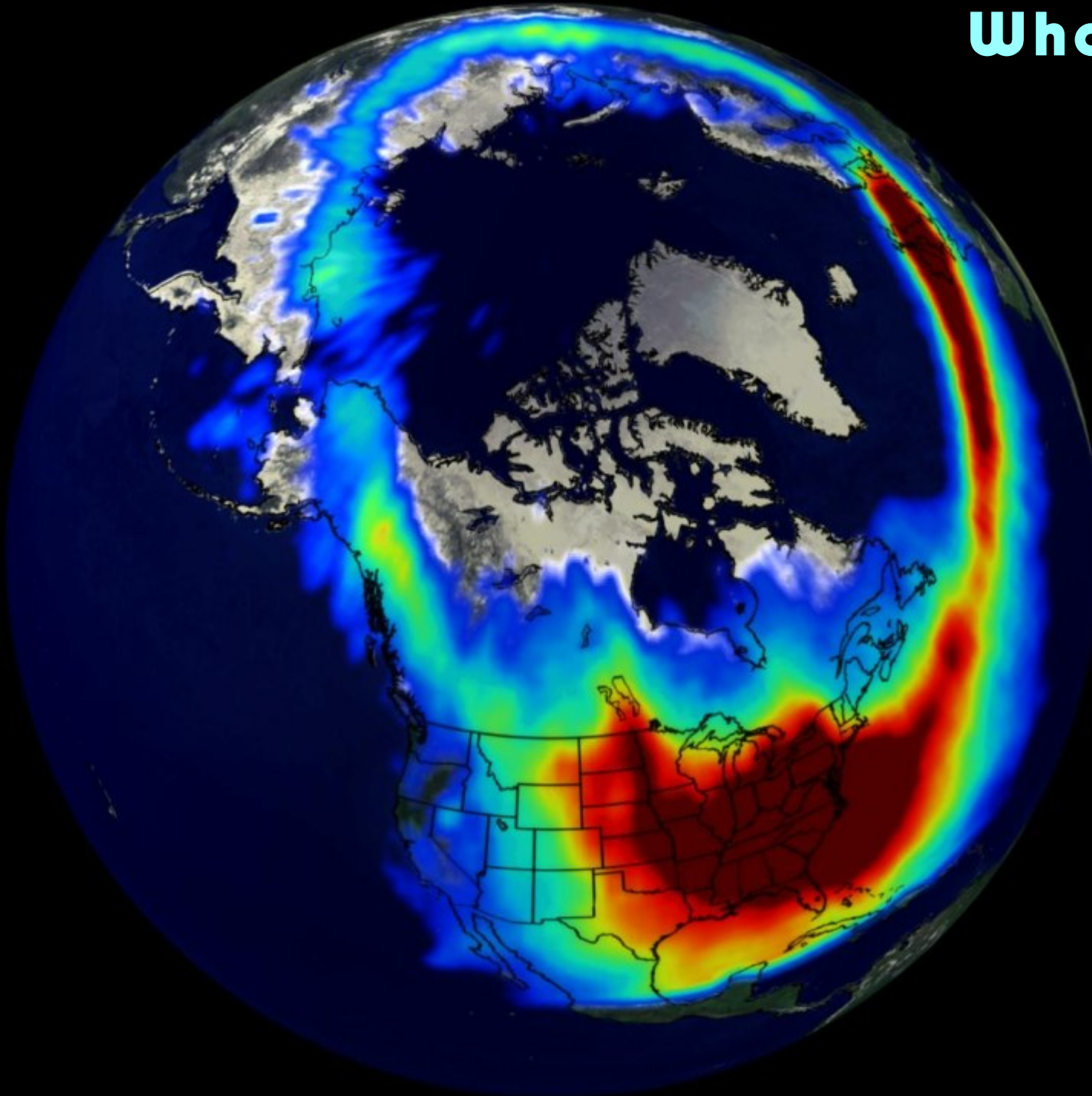
Asteroids, comets and planets, are not made of plasma, but solids, liquids and gases...the exception, not the rule.

Image: COBE's Infrared View of the Universe. **Credit:** Michael Hauser (STScI), the COBE/DIRBE Science Team, and NASA. News Release Number: STScI-1998-01
<http://hubblesite.org>

January 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1 New Year's Day	2 Bank Holiday (Scotland)	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 1991: Winston H. Bostick, pioneer dies	20
21 Martin Luther King's Birthday	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31 1881: Irving Langmuir, pioneer born			

What is Plasma?



Plasma is a form of matter.

For example, we're familiar with **solids**, such as Greenland's white arctic ice, with **liquids** such as the Earth's blue oceans, and **gases**, such as the windy atmosphere.

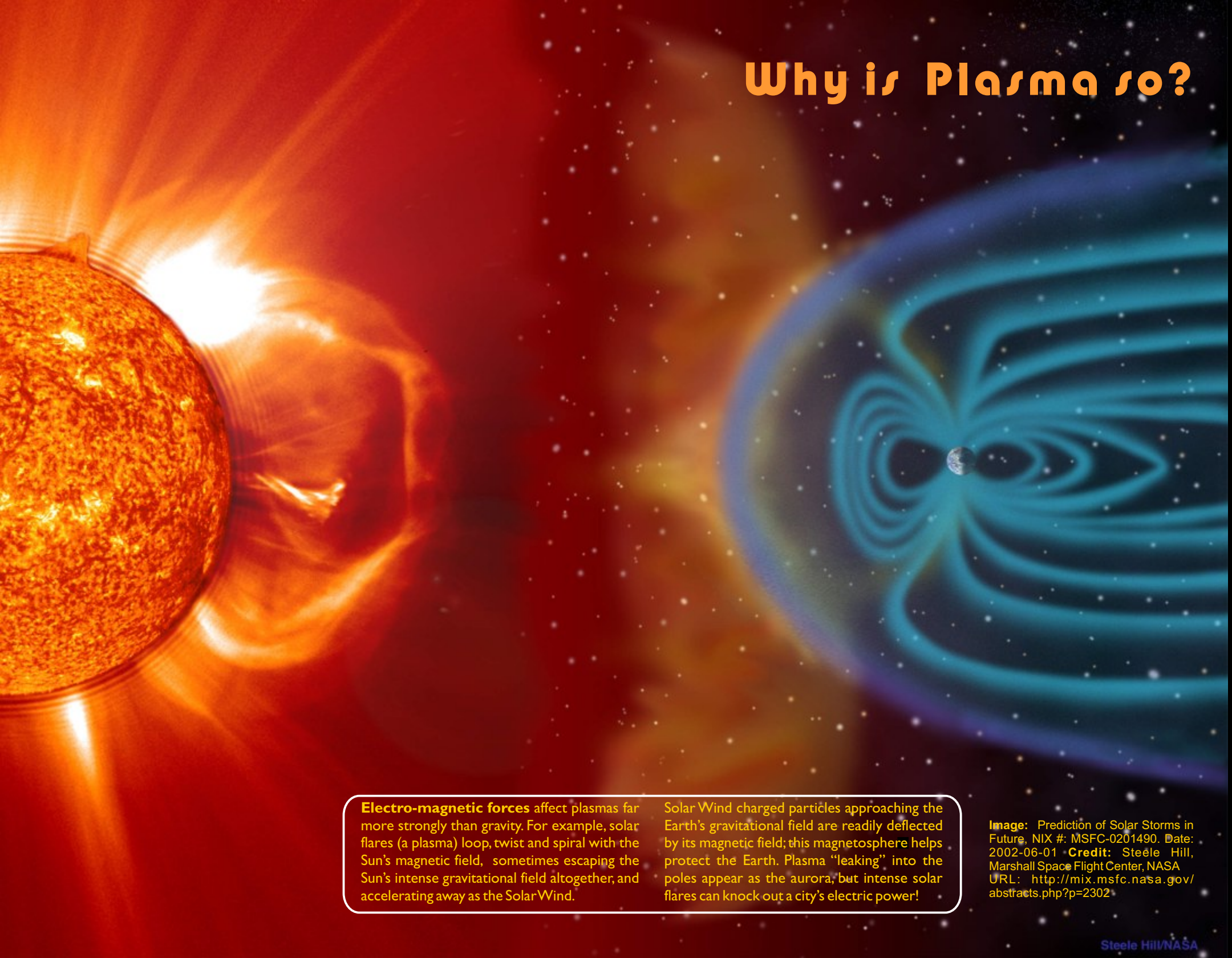
Plasma is a mixture of free-moving negatively charged electrons and positive ions (that make up atoms and molecules in other forms of matter). Plasma may also contain neutral atoms, molecules and dust, such as the Earth's ionosphere, in which we see the aurora.

Image: Polar/VIS satellite image of the aurora over the USA, showing Greenland covered in ice, taken on July 16, 2000. Credit: NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, Scientific Visualization Studio. <http://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

February 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2 Groundhog Day 1897: Kristian Birkeland starts 1st (failed) expedition	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17
18 President's Day	19	20 1989: First Workshop on Plasma Cosmology, USA	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

Why is Plasma so?



Electro-magnetic forces affect plasmas far more strongly than gravity. For example, solar flares (a plasma) loop, twist and spiral with the Sun's magnetic field, sometimes escaping the Sun's intense gravitational field altogether, and accelerating away as the Solar Wind.

Solar Wind charged particles approaching the Earth's gravitational field are readily deflected by its magnetic field; this magnetosphere helps protect the Earth. Plasma "leaking" into the poles appear as the aurora, but intense solar flares can knock out a city's electric power!

Image: Prediction of Solar Storms in Future, NIX #: MSFC-0201490. **Date:** 2002-06-01 **Credit:** Steele Hill, Marshall Space Flight Center, NASA
URL: <http://mix.msfc.nasa.gov/abstracts.php?p=2302>

March 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
					1	2
3	4	5 1916: Winston H. Bostick, pioneer born	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20	21 Good Friday Spring Equinox	22	23 Easter Sunday
24 Easter Monday	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Electrified Plasma

The Heliospheric Current Sheet

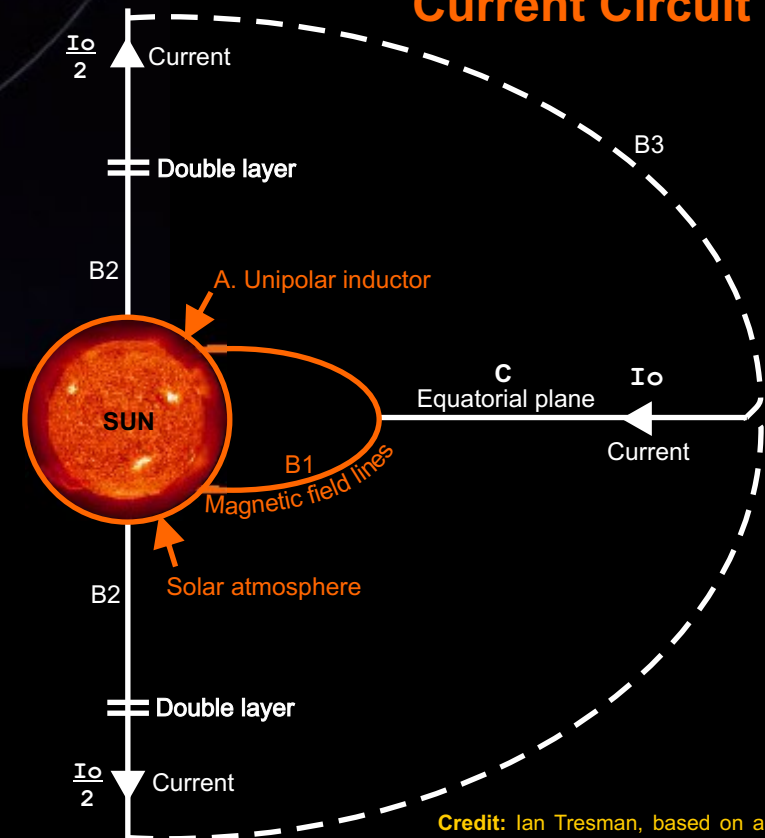
The Heliospheric Current Circuit

The heliospheric current sheet is the largest structure in the Solar System extending from the Sun and out to the heliopause, through the ecliptic in the plane of the Solar System.

Its shape results from the interaction of the Sun's rotating magnetic field with the moving Solar Wind plasma (interplanetary medium), and is sometimes likened to a ballerina's skirt.

Carrying three trillion Amps, the sheet has been described by an electric circuit (right).

Credit: From an original painting by Werner Heil, NASA, 1977. Image developed by Prof. John Wilcox to help visualize the surface that separates the Sun's two magnetic polarities. Source: Wilcox Solar Observatory, <http://wso.stanford.edu/>



Credit: Ian Tresman, based on a diagram by Hannes Alfvén in his book *Cosmic Plasma* (1981, p.55).

April 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2 1995: Hannes Alfvén, pioneer dies	3	4 1919: Sir William Crookes, pioneer dies	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 1897: J.J. Thomson identifies "radiant matter"				

Pinched Plasma filaments

Middle image: The Ant nebula (Mz3), NASA, Space Telescope Science Institute, <http://photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/catalog/pia04216>

Lower image: Pinched aluminium can, produced from a pulsed magnetic field created by rapidly discharging 2 kilojoules from a high voltage capacitor bank into a 3-turn coil of heavy gauge wire. Credit: Bert Hickman, Stoneridge Engineering: www.teslamania.com



Filamentary structure is one of the main characteristics of electrified plasma, which is produced by constricting magnetic fields. They are seen in lightning bolts, the aurora, the Sun and nebulae (eg. the Ant Nebula above)

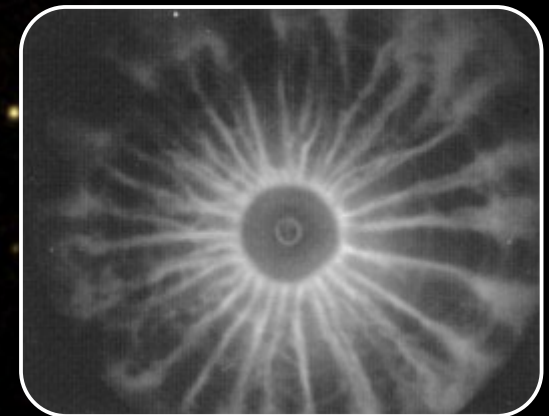
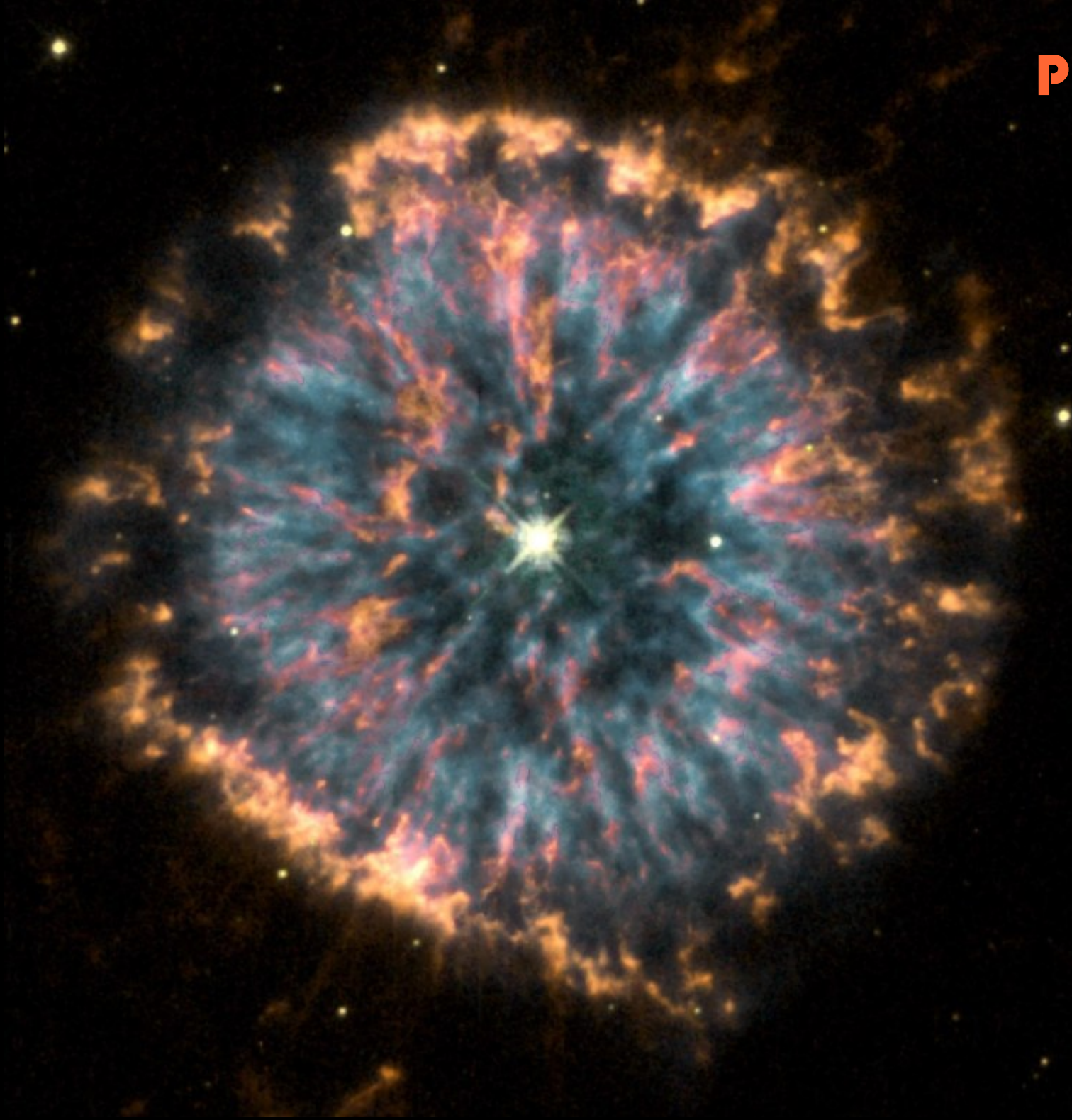
If the magnetic field becomes much stronger along one part of the filament than another, it **pinches** producing a characteristic hour-glass shape. The drinks can (left) was made this way.

Filaments often twist into helical shapes, and are sometimes called **Birkeland currents**.

May 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1	2	3	4 1937: Hannes Alfvén predicts intergalactic magnetic field
5 Cinco De Mayo May Day	6	7	8	9	10 1993: 2nd Plasma Astrophysics and Cosmology Workshop	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 Armed Forces Day	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Memorial Day Spring Bank Holiday	27	28	29	30 1908: Hannes Alfvén, pioneer born	31	

Plasma focus ?



Pairs of vortex filaments can be seen, looking down the tube of a dense plasma focus (above), a laboratory device that **electromagnetically** accelerates hot dense plasma out of a tube.

Plasma physicists may apply such knowledge gained in the **laboratory** to the **cosmos**; note similarities to, for example, the nebulae (left).

Left: NGC 6751, the Glowing Eye Nebula. **Credit:** NASA, The Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA), <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2000/12/>

Top: radial current filaments flowing from the end of a plasma focus center conductor (3.4 cm diameter) to 10 cm diameter outer conductor. **Source:** Winston H. Bostick

June 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 1903: Willard Harrison Bennett, pioneer born 1831: James Clerk Maxwell, pioneer born	14 Flag Day	15 1917: Kristian Birkeland, pioneer dies
16	17 1832: Sir William Crookes, pioneer born	18	19	20	21 Summer Solstice	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Plasma galaxy



A galaxy's stars are all plasma, and much of the interstellar space between them. Several theories describe their shape, such as spiral galaxy M81 above.

Plasma physicists have simulated galaxy formation as plasma clouds inside interacting parallel current-carrying magnetic filaments (bottom row).

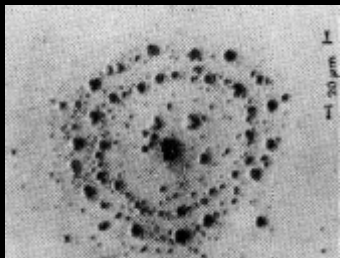
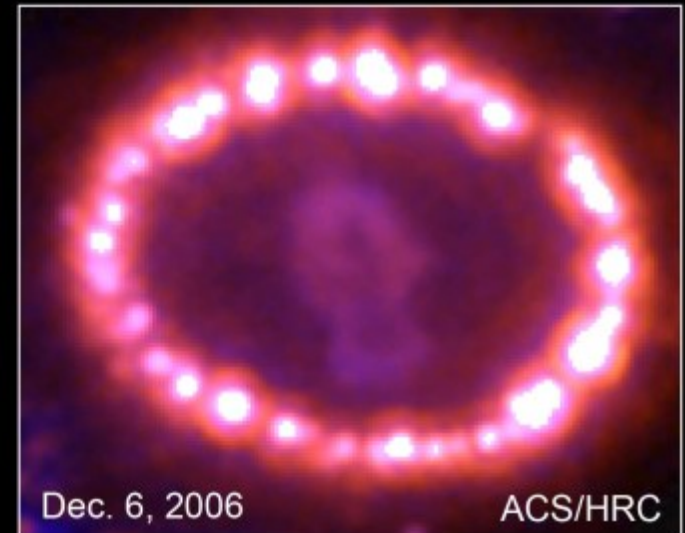
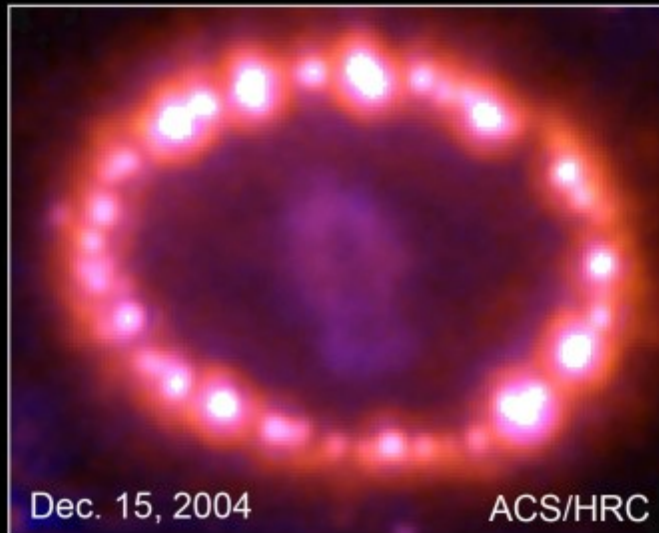
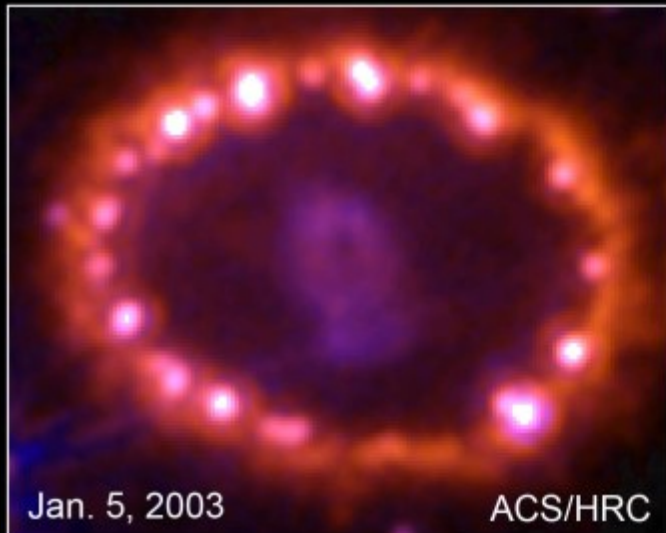
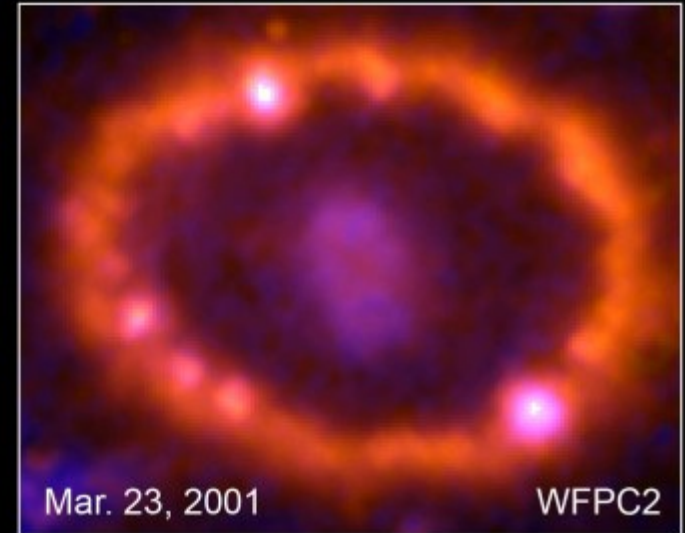
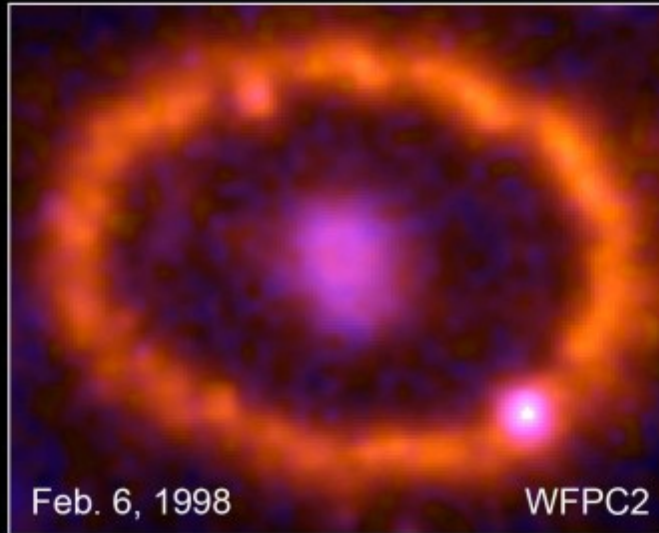
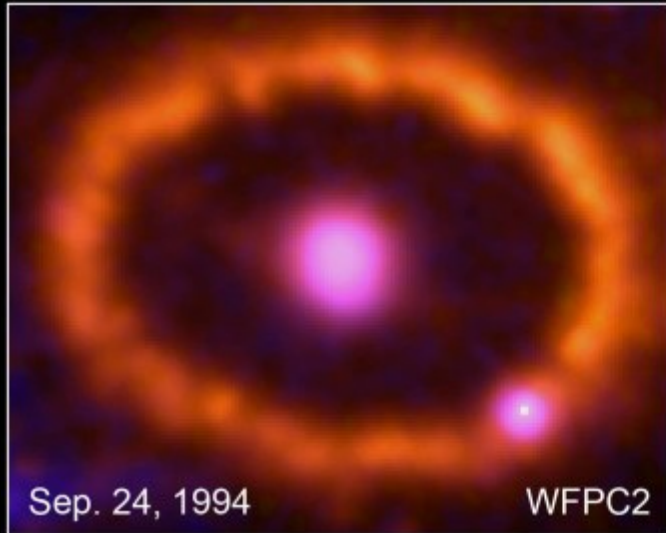
Top: M81 spiral galaxy taken with the Spitzer Space Telescope **Credit:** NASA/JPL-Caltech/S. Willner. <http://www.spitzer.caltech.edu/Media/releases/ssc2003-06/ssc2003-06c.shtml>

Lower image: Interacting Birkeland currents carrying 10^{18} Amps, length 80kpc width 35kpc, over 10^9 years. **Credit:** Anthony L. Peratt, <http://www.plasmauniverse.info/>

July 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1 1902: Kristian Birkeland begins 2nd auroral expedition	2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Plasma beams



Top: SN 1987A. Credit: NASA, ESA, P. Challis and R. Kirshner (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics). <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2007/10>

Left: Relativistic electron beam damage produced on polystyrene witness foil. Credit: Winston H. Bostick.

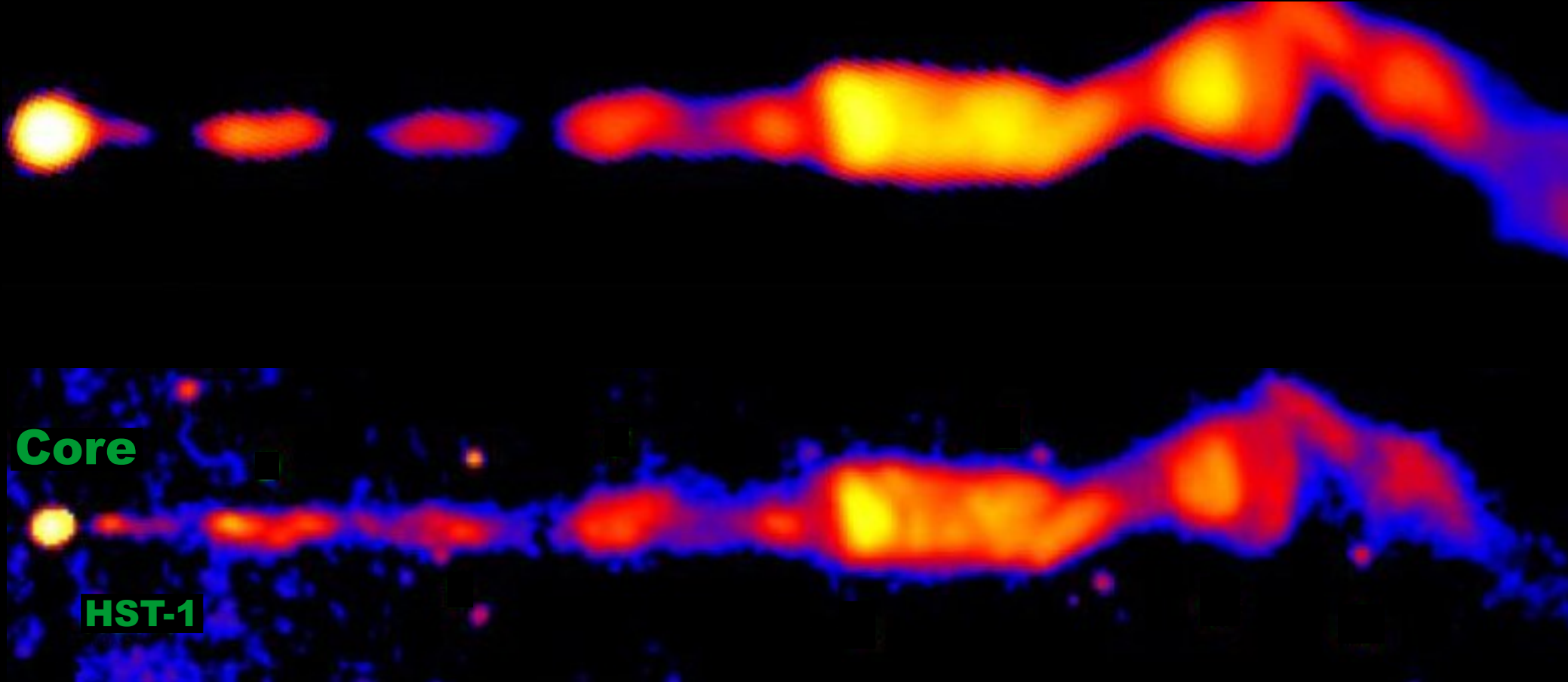
In the laboratory, a **beam** of “solid” charged particles may evolve into a hollow cylinder; the ring further subdividing into individual filamentary currents that may also pair up; see the witness foil (left) about 0.1 mm across.

Designated after the year it was detected, Supernova 1987a has been described as a “ring of pearls”. Synchrotron radiation and X-rays have also been observed, that are consistent with a **relativistic particle beam**.

August 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 1928: Irving Langmuir coins the word "plasma"	2	3
4 Summer Bank Holiday (Scotland)	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16 1957: Irving Langmuir, pioneer dies	17
18	19	20	21	22 1879: William Crookes discovers "radiant matter"	23	24
25 Summer Bank Holiday	26	27 1956: Landmark IAU Symposium no. 6 in Stockholm	28	29	30 1940: Sir J J Thomson, pioneer dies	31

Plasma jets



M87's jet was first observed by Heber Curtis in 1918 who described it as “a curious straight ray”, seen here in both radio (top) and optical wavelengths. Non-thermal polarized synchrotron radiation is also a characteristic.

Jets such as M87 are radio-luminous **pinched plasmas** whose magnetic fields may be derived from an electric current analogous to auroral Birkeland currents in planetary atmospheres. M87's jet is 5400 light years long.

Laboratory jet simulations produce shared characteristics such as power magnitude, isophotal morphology, spectra, and polarized synchrotron radiation as electrons are accelerated through a magnetic field.

Image: M87 jet in radio (top) & optical.
Credit: H. L. Marshall/MIT/
NASA/NRAO. **Radio:** NRAO/AUI/
NSF. **Optical:** NASA/STScI/UMBC/E.
Perlman *et al.*
[http://hea-www.harvard.edu/
XJET/source-d.cgi?M87](http://hea-www.harvard.edu/XJET/source-d.cgi?M87)

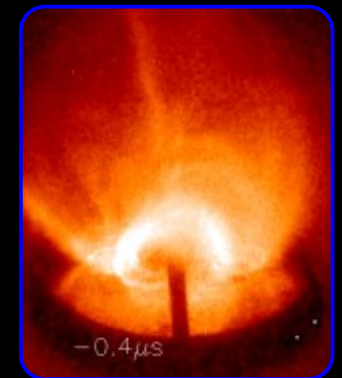
September 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 Labor Day	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Fall Equinox
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 1987: Willard Harrison Bennett, pioneer dies
29	30					

Plasma sun

The Sun is a plasma producing the solar wind, as well as solar flares and prominences: arch-shaped, sometimes twisting structures in the corona.

Plasma physicists at Caltech have made a plasma gun which produces arched, erupting, twisted flux tubes (see photo below) that are similar to solar prominences.



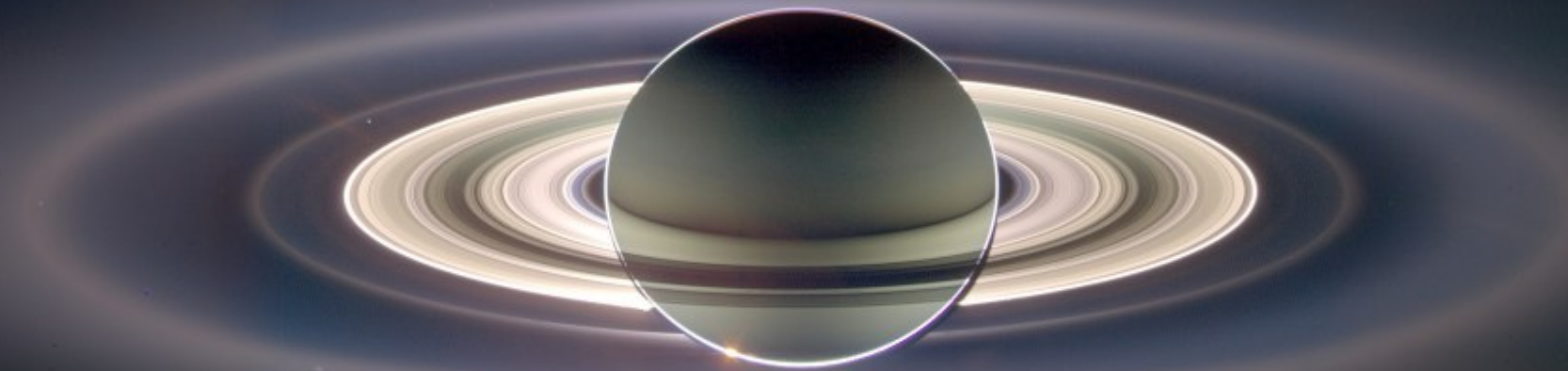
Top: Simulated prominences. Credit: J. F. Hansen and P. M. Bellan, Caltech, Bellan Plasma Group, http://ve4xm.caltech.edu/Bellan_plasma_page/

Left: Sun false color X-ray image. Credit: ISAS, Yohkoh Project.

October 2008

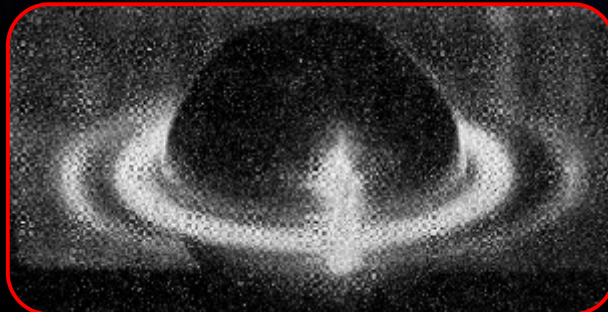
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		1 1956: Winston H. Bostick coins the word "plasmoid"	2	3 1942: Hannes Alfvén predicts Solar plasma waves	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Columbus Day	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31 Halloween		

Plasma rings



Top: Cassini's view of Saturn's rings in exaggerated color contrast. **Credit:** NASA/JPL/Space Science Institute. PIA08329. <http://photojournal.jpl.nasa.gov/catalog/PIA08329>

Right: Kristian Birkeland's small cathode-globe terrella, with about 0.1 milliampere current. Source: Sec.2, Ch VI, *The Norwegian Aurora Polaris Expedition 1902-1903*, publ. 1908.



Backlit by the Sun, Saturn's rings are composed of small particles.

In the interplanetary plasma, dust is charged negatively by electrons, and positively by sunlight, resulting in a "**dusty plasma**". Electromagnetic forces dominate.

During the 1900s, Norwegian scientist Kristian Birkeland experimented with a magnetized metal globe called a **terrella** in a vacuum chamber (see photo left).

Different currents could produce aurora...and Saturn-like rings.

November 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
					1 All Saints Day	2 All Souls Day
3	4	5 1879: James Clerk Maxwell, pioneer dies	6	7	8	9
10	11 Veterans' Day	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving Day	28	29	30

Plasma generator

Michael Faraday discovered that an electrically conductive disk rotating in a magnetic field generated an electric current between the central axis and the disk's circumference.

It is sometimes called a Faraday disk, or homopolar generator or **unipolar inductor**.

As electrically conducting plasma rotates through its own magnetic field, electric currents are created along its axes.

Unipolar inductors have been associated with the Sun, stars, galaxies, sunspots, and nebulae (left)... almost everywhere we see a rotating plasma!

Image: Crab Nebula showing the X-ray (blue), and optical (red) images superimposed. **Credit:** NASA/CXC/ASU/J. Hester et al.

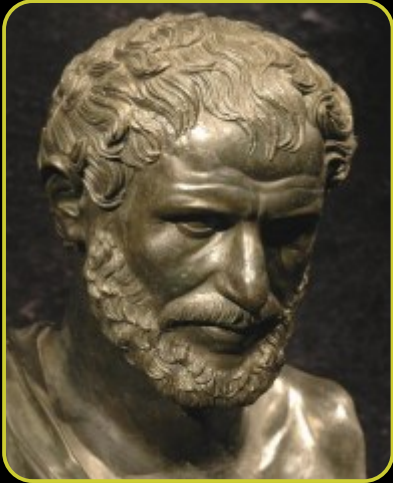
<http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2002/24/image/a/>

December 2008

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 1867: Kristian Birkeland, pioneer born
15	16	17	18 1856: Sir J J Thomson, pioneer born	19	20	21 Winter Solstice
22	23	24	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day	27	28
29	30	31 New Year's Eve				

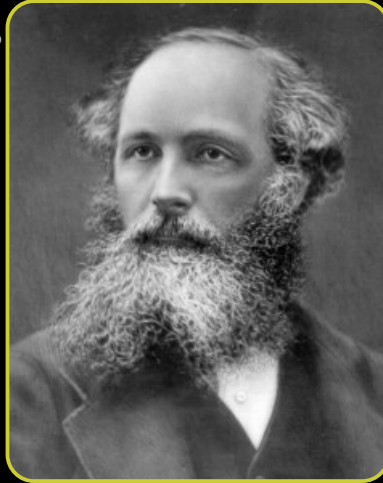
Plasma Universe pioneers

Source: Livius.Org.



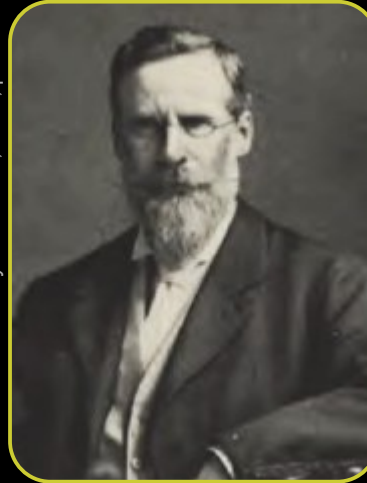
Heraclitus of Ephesus (540–475 BC) noted that: “.. the thunderbolt steers the course of all things”

Source: Cavendish Lab., Univ. of Cambridge



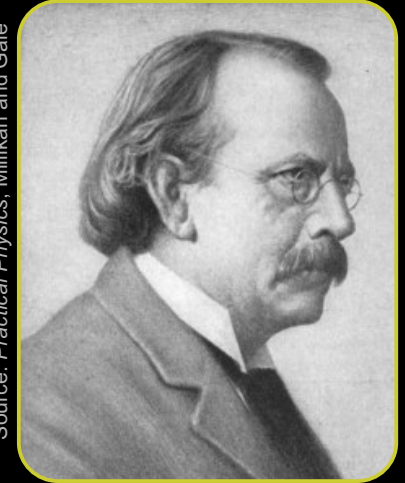
James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) devised a unified model of electricity, magnetism and inductance.

Source: *History of Science*, vol. 5, p. 106



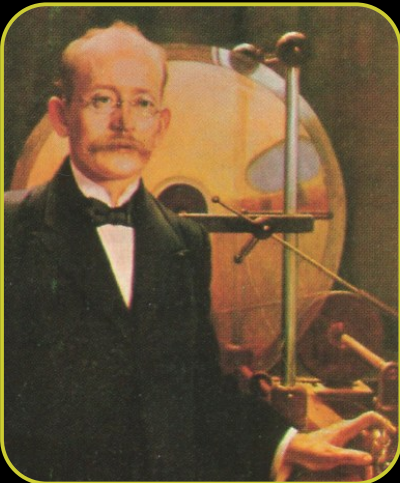
Sir William Crookes (1832-1919) discovers in 1879 “radiant matter”, he also calls the “Fourth State of Matter”.

Source: *Practical Physics*, Millikan and Gale



Sir J. J. Thomson (1856-1940) in 1897 identifies “plasma” as consisting of charged particles.

Source: Wikipedia



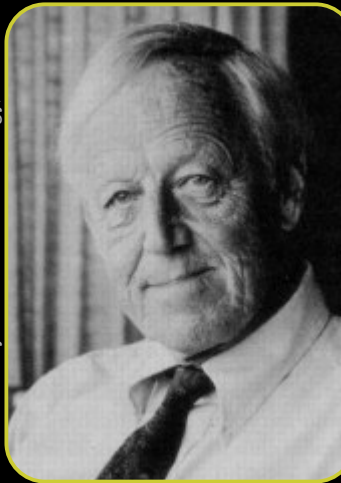
Kristian Birkeland (1867-1917) models the aurora in a terrella, and predicts “space is filled with electrons and flying electric ions of all kinds”

Source: *GE Review*, Dec. 1932



Irving Langmuir (1881-1957) investigates the properties of ionized gases, and coins the term “plasma”. 1932 Nobel Prize, Chemistry

Source: Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden



Hannes Alfvén (1908-1995) stresses the importance of electrified magnetic space plasmas. Awarded the 1970 Nobel Prize in physics.

2008 Plasma Universe Calendar

www.plasma-universe.com

With special thanks to Prof. Paul Bellan (California Institute of Technology), Hanna Dahlgren (Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden), Dr. Timothy E. Eastman (www.plasmas.org), Bert Hickman (teslamania.com), Dr. Todd Hoeksema (Stanford University), Dr Herman L. Marshall (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Dr Anthony L. Peratt (Los Alamos National Laboratory), Caroline Tresman.

Web sites

www.plasma-universe.com • plasmauniverse.info
www.plasmas.org • www.plasmacoalition.org

Books

Cosmic Plasma by Hannes Alfvén, 1981
Physics of the Plasma Universe
by Anthony L. Peratt, 1992
The Electric Sky by Donald E. Scott, 2007

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January 2009

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1 New Year's Day	2 Bank Holiday (Scotland)	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Martin Luther King's Birthday 1991: Winston H. Bostick, pioneer dies	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 1881: Irving Langmuir, pioneer born	

